

*July 12 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1994*

asked Jane Alexander, Chairperson of the National Endowment for the Arts, to implement the Presidential Design Awards Program. I am confident that she will have your full support. Please designate an individual with an appropriate background and position to serve as your

liaison with the Endowment to ensure the success of this important program. Please be advised that there will be a Presidential Design Awards Program briefing at the National Endowment for the Arts on July 18, 1994.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

## Nomination for a District of Columbia Court of Appeals Judge

*July 12, 1994*

The President today announced the nomination of Vanessa Ruiz to serve on the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. The President is authorized by statute to nominate D.C. Court of Appeals judges from a list of individuals recommended by the District of Columbia Judicial Nomination Commission.

"I am confident that Vanessa Ruiz will serve with distinction," the President said. "Her skills and dedication will be strong assets to the District of Columbia and to this court."

NOTE: A biography of the nominee was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

## Remarks Announcing Federal Flood Relief for Georgia, Alabama, and Florida in Albany, Georgia

*July 13, 1994*

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I have just had the opportunity to tour what is a small portion of the nearly 200 miles of the State of Georgia along the river that has been damaged. From here in Albany, down to Newton and back, I saw many things, lots of houses and businesses underwater, the terrible devastation of Albany State College. When I leave here, I'll have the opportunity to fly down across Bainbridge and into north Florida to see some more of the damage as it has occurred in Florida, Alabama, and Georgia.

I know there are other things which have occurred that I haven't seen in Macon and Warner Robins. And Americus suffered terrible loss of life; Montezuma's business district has been very badly damaged. And all through middle and southwest Georgia and in Alabama and Florida, we've had over a million acres of farmland damaged. This is a very serious disaster.

I want to thank FEMA and James Lee Witt for the work that they have done, and Mr. Witt came down with me today. Mr. Panetta and I flew down here today with James Lee Witt,

with Senator Nunn and Senator Coverdell and Congressman Bishop and Congressman Rowland. And we met Secretary Espy when we got here, and I thank him, also Secretary Pena and Rodney Slater from the Transportation Department and Secretary Cisneros.

We've had Senator Heflin and Senator Shelby and Senator Graham and Senator Mack on the phone with us. And of course, we have the three Governors here, Governor Miller, Governor Chiles, and Governor Folsom, along with the Lieutenant Governor; the secretary of state and the agricultural commissioner of Georgia; Mayor Keenan and the county executive here, Gil Barrett; and the emergency service officers of Georgia and Florida.

Let me say that in a flood like this—and I've been through them as a Governor and as President, when we had the 500-year flood in the Midwest last year—that the biggest tragedy is always the human tragedy. You have 50,000 evacuees, already over 6,200 applications for assistance. We want to be most sensitive to that. But today, I would like to announce a com-

prehensive package of assistance that we can make available today and also explain what happens after today.

Today we will provide an additional package of relief funds and loans to Georgia, Florida, and Alabama totaling over \$60 million. FEMA will free up from its existing budget over \$11.5 million to clean up the kind of debris that I saw so much of today, to provide emergency shelter and clean water, which is terribly important, and to utilize sandbags where they're necessary to hold back waters.

We'll allocate \$4 million from the Department of Labor to provide jobs for workers who have been dislocated by this flood who are willing to participate in the cleanup and the other work that will be necessary to recover from the flood. The Secretary of Transportation will be able to provide over \$12 million immediately to help to rebuild the damage to the Federal highways. HUD will provide \$38 million in loans to repair some of the housing that has been destroyed so that we can help those families who can return to these houses go back as quickly as possible. In addition to that, HUD will set aside up to \$10 million in housing vouchers for those who qualify for them if they are needed.

The Secretary of Agriculture, who is here, understands what it's like when there are 100,000 acres of farmland under water, as there are in this county alone. We have agreed that we will ask Congress to approve crop loss disaster assistance for this area on the same basis as that which was provided for the agricultural victims of the Middle West flood, that is, so that they can receive full reimbursement. The United States Department of Agriculture will also provide relief for Farmers Home Administration borrowers who are affected by the flood and who are having difficulties meeting their obligations.

One of the things we do not want to do, with the decline in farmers already so evident all across our country, is to allow this flood to become a reason for more good farmers to leave the land. So we're going to do everything we can through the Department of Agriculture to keep the farmers who have been hurt by this, farming.

Two other agencies I want to mention who may come into play here: One is the Small Business Administration, which has emergency very low interest loans for businesses and for homeowners, if needed; and the Department of

Health and Human Services may be required to provide some assistance because of the health and safety implications of this flood. We're obviously very concerned about the water treatment plants and the other public facilities that have been damaged by the flood and that still could be damaged as the crest moves southward.

So that basically summarizes this. Let me also end where I began. The most important thing here is to help people to put their lives back together. We already have over 5,000 trailers here to try to help people get back to some normal, healthy, decent living condition, who have been displaced in their homes.

It was one of the people here in our meeting—I think it was Gil—said that right now a lot of good people are just going on adrenaline, and neighbors are helping neighbors and church groups and civic groups and the Red Cross and the National Guard. People are just pouring their hearts out and working together. But in the end, it sinks in on people that a lot of them have lost everything they had. Fewer than 10 percent of the people who have been displaced have any flood insurance. The per capita income of a lot of these counties is way below not only the national average but the average in the States involved. A large percentage of the people who have been totally devastated here are eligible for public assistance.

So our first priority is going to be to try to help these people get their lives in order. And we ask them, and through you, all of you in the news media, we ask you to help us to make sure that if there is some glitch, some foul-up, some delay, some problem, that we know about it as quickly as possible so we can put the hammer down and solve it as quickly as possible.

This essentially concludes what I have to say. I do want to give these letters of commitment. We don't have checks anymore, we do electronic funds transfer as part of our reinventing Government program in Washington. But these are commitment letters that will support the funds transfer to the Governors here. I want to give Governor Miller his, Governor Folsom his, and Governor Chiles his.

And let me make just this one last point to all of you. A lot of the work that's going to be done here will be done after these waters go down. A lot of the damage that will be done to crops will not become apparent until after the waters go down. And a lot of the agony

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that people will have in their businesses and these little towns that have had all their business districts wiped out will not become apparent until after the waters go down.

Our commitment is to stay in this for the long run and to do whatever is necessary. Mr. Panetta told me on the way down here today that we can make all these commitments we've made today and make good on them with the budgets that we have. We don't need—except for the farm assistance that I just mentioned, we don't need to go back to the Congress and ask for any more legislation on appropriations now. But we may or may not in the future, depending on what the facts are. And I just want to reemphasize to all of you, we will stay in this for the long run.

We are still working with Governor Chiles in Florida on the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew. The bad news is, we have to do it; the

good news is, we are doing it. So we know that this will not be done overnight. And we want a clear message to go out to the citizens in Georgia, in Alabama, in Florida that we will stay in this for the long run; we will stay until the job is done. We know this is going to be a personal agony for tens of thousands of people. But we will do the best we can to help you put your lives back together.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:58 p.m. in the Ayres Corp. Building at the Southwest Regional Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Lawton Chiles of Florida; Gov. Jim Folsom of Alabama; Gov. Zell Miller of Georgia; Lt. Gov. Pierre Howard of Georgia; Max Cleland, Georgia secretary of state; Tommy Irvin, Georgia agriculture commissioner; and Mayor Paul Keenan of Albany.

## Statement on the Report on the American Helicopter Tragedy in Iraq *July 13, 1994*

I have been briefed on the report prepared by Major General Andrus of the 3d Air Force on the accidental downing on April 14 of two U.S. Army helicopters that were flying over Iraq as part of Operation Provide Comfort. The men and women on these helicopters were serving their countries in a humanitarian effort to help ensure the safety and welfare of the Iraqi-Kurdish people in the aftermath of the Gulf War.

I commend Secretary Perry, General Shalikashvili, and General Andrus for producing a thorough analysis of what went wrong on that terrible day and for ordering a sensible program of corrective actions to help prevent such tragedies in the future. I intend to ensure that these actions are implemented, and I look forward to receiving progress reports from Secretary Perry and General Shalikashvili on this process.

In considering this report, we necessarily are drawn to the errors of commission and omission that produced the tragedy. At the same time, we must keep in mind that Operation Provide Comfort has been and continues to be a very

successful coalition effort that has effectively deterred Iraq from disrupting peace and order in the UN-established security zone. Because of Operation Provide Comfort, human rights abuses against the Kurdish population of northern Iraq have been curtailed.

The 26 brave Americans, allied and Iraqi-Kurdish personnel who died in the crashes served with courage and professionalism, and they lost their lives trying to save the lives of others. The important work they were doing must, and will, continue.

To the families and loved ones of those who were killed, I offer my sincere condolences and, on behalf of the United States of America, the gratitude of our entire Nation.

In remarks at the memorial service for the victims, I said that it is our duty to find the answers to this tragedy that these families rightfully seek. The report Secretary Perry is releasing today is an important step toward fulfilling that pledge.